



se.3-4
track taken from se.3

compilation 'like music to their ears-vol.1'
mechanoise labs - 2003

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The French label Mechanoise Labs, usually known for its violent industrial assaults, has gathered forces from various French and Belgian electronic projects, with a surprisingly calm compilation as the end result. Though harsh, gritty elements and industrial sounds are certainly present, the overall atmosphere is rather tranquil. The label uses the description 'electronic atmospheres and tranquil noise'. Fourteen different acts are present, most of which I did not know before. The subtitle of the album is volume I, so I assume there are plans to make a series of this concept. Which is certainly a good plan, because there is enough quality on this compilation. But for some reason there are not much tracks that really stand out or attracted my attention directly, perhaps because most contributions are rather similar style-wise.

Rudra Vena opens the compilation with a tension-building electronic track, with some drony waves and minimal ritual percussion. Hirichimiq impresses me with a calm soundtrack with some classical elements, resembling the ambient cathedrals that Raison d'Etre usually builds. Dusk of Hope sounds a little darker and noisier, with a very distant sound, coming from a deep cellar. One of my favourite contributions comes from L'Arme \square Gauche, with nice machine rhythms, atmospheric neo-classical layers and guitar sounds and some choirs in the background. Very good!

Stelladrine offers a low-key soundscape, with mysterious speech samples. Rather minimal, but with hypnotic qualities. Sobria Ebrietas follows this tranquil line, with spacious stretched layers and strange bubbling sounds. With Mourmansk 150 we arrive at a noisier track, monotonous slow death industrial. Asphalt Leash is also known for harsh music, the title like 'with knives at their throats' does not sound very cosy, but fits the cold factory sounds, metallic noises and low distorted layers. Ripit sounds very dense, a wall of noise with a few isolated bleeps and beats.

Chupacabras is more tranquil again, a mysterious soundscape with French spoken words. Towards the end the track gets noisier and darker, quite haunting. 'Warmecha v1.2' by Tin.RP is very rhythmic, based around some monotonous loops. Giscard le Survivant contributes a moody soundscape, with estranging organ sounds and a varied menu of textures, clicks and samples. With Zerogoki we descend into darker catacombs again, with a mixture of ambient elements and noisy sounds. Inoculation is the last act on "Like Music to their ears", with a noisy, deep wave of sound. With a limited edition of 100 copies this cd-r will bring the participants no world fame, but for the insiders there will perhaps be a few names to remember.

Recycle your ears

I have already ranted here and here about what I think of compilation focusing on artists from one country only, so let's spare some bytes and not repeat why I think that it does more disservice than goods to the bands. Anyway, "Like music to their ears vol.1" takes the same concept as "Q.F.G." and gets out more or less at the same time, but instead of being released in a glossy triple digipack and going everywhere music-wise, it's focused on the noisy, "dark" and atmospheric material, with 14 tracks on a CDR limited to 100 copies. It begins with a nice, and rather electronic sounding track by Rudra Vena (who, like Stelladrine and Tin.Rp, also appeared on "Q.F.G."), but gets quickly more ambient, first with the calm stretched soundscapes of Hirochimiq, and then with the subdued noise of Dusk Of Hope. This overall tone, relaxed but tense and gritty, is prominent on the whole compilation, which constantly oscillates the decidedly gritty (Mourmansk 150, Asphalt Leash) and the more balanced, hypnotic material (Stelladrine, Giscard Le Survivant. This all ends up with the feeling (surprising judging the overall loudness and aggressivity of most of Mechanoise Labs's past releases) that "Like music to their ears vol.1" has gathered the calmest tracks from a bunch of usually violent noise experimentalists. Not giving up the noise completely, a lot of these tracks have more of a slow, numbing effect, and have lost in intensity what they have gained in accessibility. I would be hard pressed to pick up some tracks on this disc, as if the compilation appeared as relatively coherent, none of the pieces appeared to stand out. A good thing for the sake of the projet, it however didn't really motivate me to check out more any of the participating act. However, I have to admit that the whole thing is well done, with a precise direction, which would have me say that it might appeal more to people into that precise genre than to me.

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Les volontés se démultiplient dans l'underground hexagonal : après la compilation « In this cold terrific room » envoyée par La Chambre Froide, c'est au tour de Mechanoise Labs de nous gâter franchement avec cette collection éclatée de musiques électroniques et belles à pleurer, et dont l'optique, dans des genres assez différents, reste toujours de faire connaître et diffuser des œuvres méconnues et contemporaines. On ne peut pas dire, d'ailleurs, que la scène électronique soit en reste, devant le parterre de fleurs sombres que nous donne à apprécier de vive voix ce CD unique en son genre. Le travail des ambiances s'y révèle pointu (Rudra Vena : « Flux » et Hirochimiq avec son « Happening » sont particulièrement inquiétants, ce dernier entrant dans certains des champs balisés par CMI), et le minimalisme des fréquences y est de rigueur (Dusk of Hope : « Expériences sur matériel humain » ; Stelladrine : « Project snowbird »). La compilation maintient, au fil de chacun des artistes présentés, une pression constante : la guitare désenchantée et répétitive accentue la pression inquiète des boucles saturées du « Strong and athletic » de L'Arme A Gauche. Les séquences se suivent, et se superposent pour conduire à un amas progressivement bruitiste sur « Track 4 », composé par Sobria Ebrietas. Une approche plus typiquement industrielle, à la Brighter Death Now, fait l'objet des infra-basses et saturations de Mourmansk 150 (« Disorder »). Un bruitisme plus sec s'accomplit ensuite au fil des minutes

éfrenées par Asphalt Leash, et avec bonheur (« With knives at their throats »), mais ce bruitisme ne capitule jamais devant les mélodies qui fondent les textures. Il se poursuit de manière plus abstraite et linéaire, mais tout aussi expérimental avec Ripit et son « Deadline overlap ». Puis, si le spoken word entrepris par Chupacabras nous laisse de marbre, on se laisse finalement prendre au jeu de ses montées abstraites et inexorables qui font de « Tournesols, horloges et comètes » une des pièces les plus atypiques de l'ensemble. La boucle parasitaire de Tin.RP, qui installe le non-confort sur « warmecha v1.2 » condense l'essentiel de nos peurs quand surgit Giscard Le Survivant et ses ambiances étranges et décalquées sur nos décalages et le temps qui s'échappe de leurs manifestations. Giscard Le Survivant et Zerogoki, dans un style ambient paradoxal, font d'ailleurs office de secondes grosses curiosités issues d'un ensemble dont la conclusion, formulée par Inoculation à travers « Dead end », consacre la supériorité du bruitisme sur l'ensemble des démarches entreprises par toutes ces formations. Du bonheur en barre, pour amateurs d'une postériorité à donner au rock. A se procurer d'urgence.

www.burningemptiness.fr.st <<http://www.burningemptiness.fr.st>> [Robots & Electronic Brains]

I never did French at school and I haven't progressed far enough in my beginners' French class (once a week in dinner breaks at work - je suis Jimmy Possession, et vous etes?) to be sure what the sleeve notes say. Mostly it seems to be about the physical, disruptive, effects that noise can have on the human body. There's something about the number of ways sleep can be disturbed by noise too, but I don't think the sounds on here will be giving anybody nightmares. I'm finding it pretty soporific in fact. Sure, this isn't a selection of nursery rhymes played on muted xylophones and sung in a whisper by your mum. But then it's not exactly a full-frontal assault with all guns blazing either. So there's noise and distortion and concrete and long wave radio and yada yada whatever, but it seems to bleed out of the speakers and lap up against your ears, not shoot out of the bass bins intent on rupturing your spleen. Picks of these gentle manoeuvres belong to our old friends Tin.RP whose noise is a steam-powered factory starting up for the day and Hirochimi who manages to sound huge by blending strings in to the atmosphere of a chapel.